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THE TEACHING OF COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY

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We need some studies in high school which shall in some measure give the student a bird's-eye view of our industrial life. As it is now, in most cases the student finishes his high-school work with very little idea of the industrial life into which he is to go. The same argument that is urged for manual training may be applied to commercial geography. The industries have left the occupations of the home to be taken up in the factories. The boy and girl no longer have any opportunity to see these processes, yet, in order really to understand modern life they should have some knowledge of the great industries on which modern life depends.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss a line of development which we have followed in the De Kalb Township High School in the past four years in working over the subject of commercial geography. Commercial geography, as taught in the past, while apparently giving the student a knowledge of industrial life, has not in reality done so. I think those who are familiar with it will agree that it has been largely a mass of statistics, grouped around cities and countries, with very little material that could be called interpretative of modern life. Yet the writer believes that commercial geography, rightly interpreted, could be made one of the most valuable studies in the curriculum and one that would be an aid to every student, whether preparing for college or for business.

The point of view of the old geography has been industry in relation to countries and not industry in relation to man. This is a fundamental difference, and changes the subject from one of statistics to a discussion of human needs and the way industry has developed to supply them. Secondly, commercial geography must discuss industrial processes as a unit; that is, by taking the

raw product and tracing its development until it becomes a finished product ready for the consumer. Lastly, commercial geography should discuss the conditions of labor in the various occupations, the opportunities for employment in them, and the pay that labor receives. This work will relate the study to the demand for vocational help and guidance.

We may criticize the present commercial geography in that it takes almost no account of man's social and intellectual needs. These surely demand some treatment in the study of modern life.

Let us consider briefly the needs of a man as shown in commerce. Commerce is determined by human needs and in high school should be discussed from this point of view. This we have tried to do in organizing the work in De Kalb. Commercial geography, when organized from a geographical point of view, loses its human interest and becomes mere facts and figures. The discussion of needs, however, makes it live and makes it worth while. The fundamental human needs are for what are called the subsistence wants; that is, for food, clothing, and shelter. Under the first head we should consider: first, cereals for their value as food, which measures man's need for them; then where they are grown and their preparation and the milling of them until they finally reach the consumer in the form of food. In the same way, meats would be considered in relation to their value as food; then in respect to stock raising, slaughtering, preparation for food, etc. In a similar manner would be taken up the important vegetable foods; then beverages, tea, coffee, and cocoa, and finally, what is very important in our day and yet has received almost no consideration in modern textbooks, the question of canned foods, their value as compared with fresh foods, their proper canning, possibility of decay and infection, etc.

It should be said that under all the preceding subdivisions the geographical side is considered. This, of course, is mentioned when the origin of the raw material is taken up. Similarly, the place of production of intermediate and finished products is considered; but this geographical side is only incidental to the more fundamental question of the supply of human needs and the adaptability of natural products through the work of man to meet his needs. In

like manner, as the last subdivision under each topic, as for instance, cereals or meats or stone quarrying, the condition of labor is studied, the number of men employed is taken up, and the pay of labor in its various grades is mentioned. The opportunities for advancement are also considered. This brings in the human element in relation to the individual pupil and makes him familiar with the great industrial processes on their human side. It also offers him some little basis for choosing intelligently an occupation.

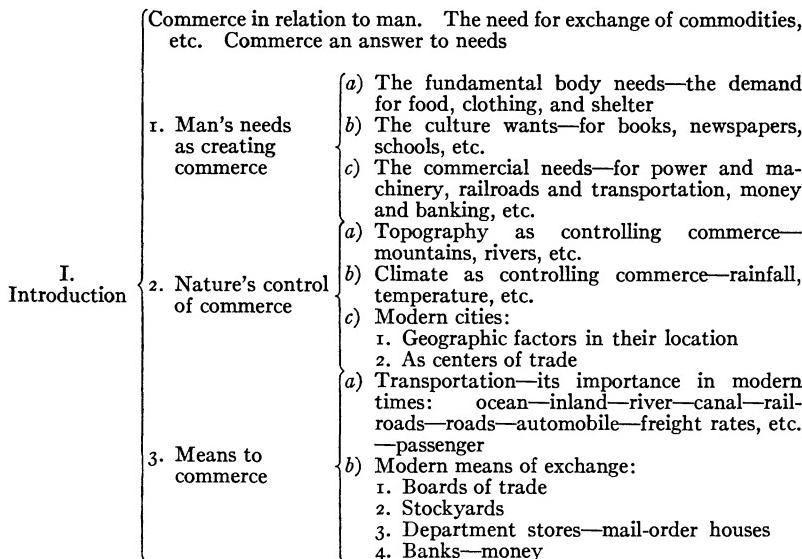
In a similar manner we take up the subdivisions under shelter, taking up the woods, stone, cement, brick, tile, glass, and metals, which are used in building. These topics are treated as units, tracing the product from the raw material to the finished product. As a subdivision under shelter, we consider internal furnishing of the house, the problems of furniture, carpets, rugs, and like articles being considered.

We consider the need for trained social service as exemplified in law, medicine, engineering, teaching, and government service, etc. As will be seen from the foregoing brief outline, we have broken away largely from the geographical basis of commercial geography and have substituted man and his needs as the center of our study.

The justification for doing this will be the greater value of the work to our students. This is to be decided, not entirely from theoretical reasons, but from the results in the classroom and the value after the student leaves school. We can speak with some degree of certainty on the first of these heads. Under the latter head, we shall have to wait for the pupil himself to express himself. We find the interest in the classroom is much greater when we consider commerce from the foregoing point of view. There is real human interest in the topics taken up and the needs studied seem to have a greater vitality than under the old method. Under our old method of teaching commercial geography, after a few general principles at the introduction were considered and after the novelty of the statistics had worn off, both class and teacher felt the subsequent work under that head to have little practical value. Teachers will find that their classes are interested in reorganizing the material in the text on the basis of this plan.

We are fairly convinced that something akin to this point of view must ultimately be introduced into the curriculum of the high school, some study that gives the student a fairly concrete idea of the great industrial processes which go to make up the world of business, and, on the other hand, gives him a definite idea of the human element involved in the labor which produces the commodity which he uses constantly, but of whose origin he has very little conception. I append herewith in diagrammatic form an outline of our course.

OUTLINE FOR TEACHING COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY



V. Shelter	1. House Construction 2. House Furnishings 3. Heating 4. Lighting	a) Woods b) Metals: c) Stone—quarrying—polishing d) Cements e) Brick and tile f) Glass—how made a) Furniture b) Carpets c) Decorations d) Paintings a) Stoves b) Furnaces—how worked—extent of trade c) Hot water—how worked—extent of trade d) Steam a) Oil—kerosene—when discovered b) Gas—when discovered—how made c) Electricity—advantages d) Matches	1. Hard 2. Soft 3. Value as building material and furniture 1. Iron 1. Granite 2. Limestone—marble 3. Sandstone 1. Importance as a building material 2. Manufacture Composition How made Importance of clays 1. Value of industry centers Hard and soft woods Manufacture Carpet wool Fibers Paints Oils Colors	Forestry Logs Lumbering Mill work Forestry Logs Lumbering Mill work Value as building material Smelting Use in buildings
VI. Mining	1. Material found in earth's crust 2. Importance in industry of iron, copper, aluminum, clay, coal, etc. 3. Mining dangers, etc. (see Power)	1. Fuel a) Coal	Mining Pumps Shafts Lifts	
VII. Power Needs	1. Tools and machinery metals—importance in modern life 2. Importance of steel in machinery	2. Power a) Steam b) Electricity—advantages c) Water power—importance d) Machinery—lubricants e) Gas engine—importance—gasoline f) Flying machines	Steam engine Steam turbine Boilers	

VIII. Social Needs	1. Communications	<i>(a)</i> Telephone—importance—men employed <i>(b)</i> Newspaper—printing—reporting <i>(c)</i> Telegraph { 1. Wire 2. Wireless}
	2. Measurement of time—importance—watches and clocks	<i>(a)</i> Theater—place in life
	3. Amusements	<i>(b)</i> Arts of pleasure—baseball, etc. <i>(c)</i> Tobacco—value, etc.
	4. The automobile	
	5. Hotels	
	6. See the "Profession" for further social needs	
IX. Mental and Aesthetic Needs	1. Books	<i>(a)</i> Paper { Food pulp Linen pulp} <i>(b)</i> Printing { Importance in arts and science The mechanics} <i>(c)</i> Binding { The art}
	2. Writing materials	<i>(a)</i> Inks—source <i>(b)</i> Pencils—source <i>(a)</i> Pictures <i>(b)</i> Sculpture <i>(c)</i> Architecture, etc.
	3. Art	
	4. Law—bench and bar work in the community	
	5. Medicine	
	6. Teaching	
X. The Profes- sions— service. Need for Trained Serv- ice in Society	7. Engineering	Importance of professions
	8. Government service	Numbers
	9. Government service	Opportunities
	10. Powder	
	11. Dynamite	
	12. Explosives	
XI. Arts of War	13. Guns	
	14. Cannon	
XII. Competition of nation with nation		
XIII. Free trade versus tariff		

Some useful reference books for work along this line are: Yeats, four volumes, a mine of information, treats from this viewpoint; Symonds, *Animal Products*; Crookes, *The Wheat Problem*; Chesholm, *Commercial Geography*; magazine articles on business.